

Record

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Super Summer training spiritual leaders

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

"If I could account for the biggest contribution to my spiritual growth to one thing, I think it would be my summers at Super Summer as a student and as a leader," said John Cartwright, a student at Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College (MC) in Clinton.

Obviously, Super Summer is not your average youth camp. During July 15-19, 653 students

and their leaders, representing approximately 100 churches from all over Mississippi, gathered on the MC campus for intensive training in discipleship and evangelism.

"It's a unique camp because students have to meet certain criteria in order to attend," said Harvey Ellis, consultant in the Discipleship and Family Ministry (DFM) department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, which sponsored the event.

"Students are expected to have shown leadership in their local churches. For instance, they need to show evidence that they have shared their faith with at least one person; they should have shared their testimony before their church or their youth group; they have to have completed a small-group discipleship study; and the youth minister or pastor needs to have signed off on them, saying that the student is a leader and shows a desire to grow in their relationship with Christ."

Ellis stated that Super Summer was the largest single youth camp in Mississippi this year. "That's significant, especially when you take into account that students have to be invited to attend."

When questioned about the significant increase in participation this year in comparison to 2001, Ellis said, "I think it's

just the enthusiasm of the youth ministers who've brought groups in the past, who can see the evidence of what happens in the lives of their kids."

The responses of Megan Redmond of First Church, Quitman, and Amanda Barlow of First Church, Hattiesburg, were typical.

"I'll be a sophomore this year," said Amanda, "and this is my second year at Super Summer. It's my favorite camp. The people here are just awesome. It's great!"

Amanda agreed. "It's the people that make this camp so good. It's the most fun, impactful, exciting thing I've ever done."

Participants are divided into "schools" during the course of the week. Each school has its own time or worship and Bible study. The schools are broken down into smaller "family" sized units for more intensive discussion. The camp also includes recreation by schools and joint worship services involving all participants.

The worship speaker for the week was Stacy L. Spencer, pastor/developer of New Direction Christian Church in Memphis. Music worship leader was Jake Gullede of Assurance Ministries in Gainesville, Ga.

Brandon Wilemon, youth minister at Harrisville Church, Harrisville, served as a team leader coordinator.

"Super Summer has matured me spiritually. It gives the opportunity to experience things you don't always get to

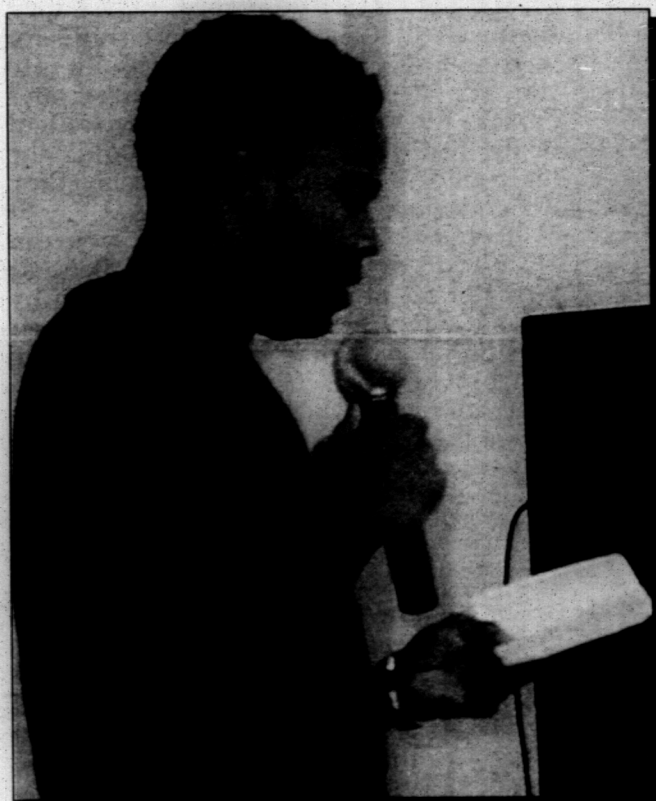
experience in church. When I've brought groups, the kids have matured, because they get to see the whole picture."

Michael Kelley, youth minister at First Church, Ponchartroula, La., acknowledged the benefits to his students and himself. Kelley has served six years at Super Summer, this year as an associate dean.

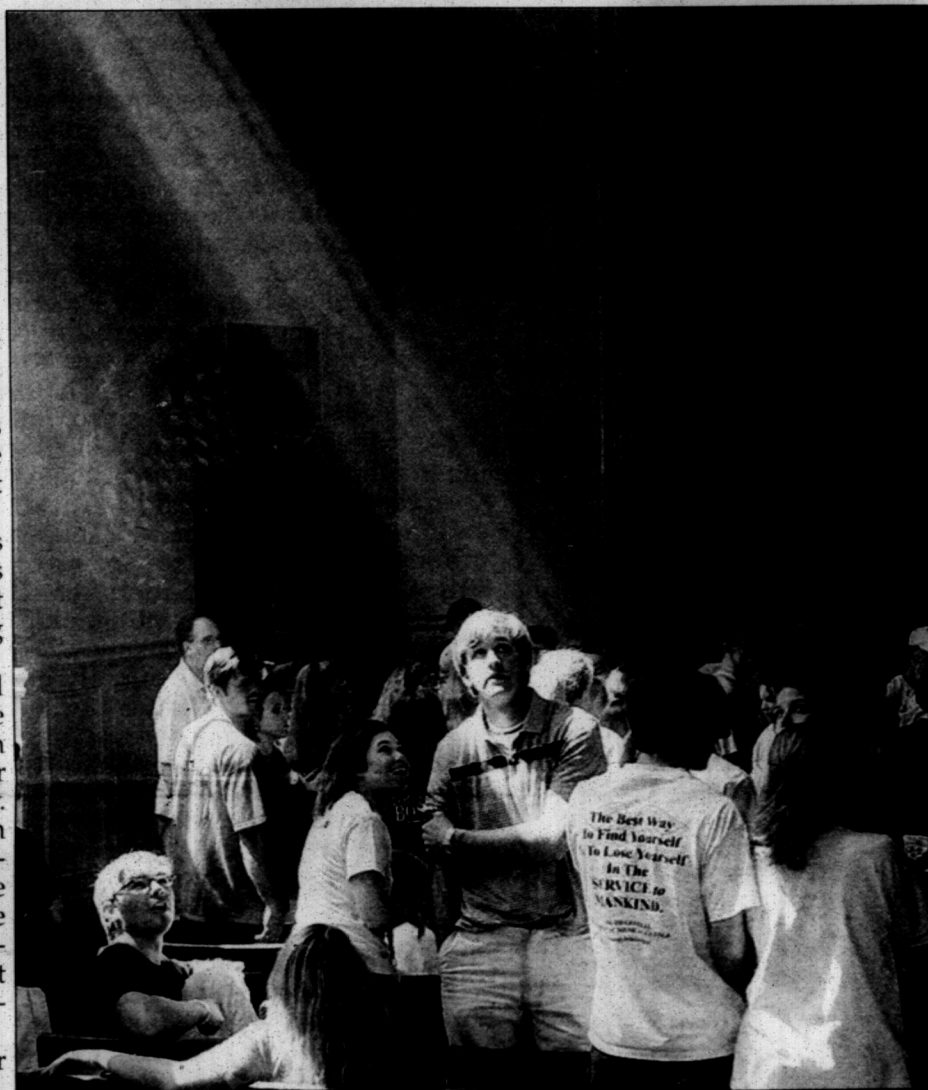
"The environment of Super Summer adds so much," Kelley said. "When you've got committed folks working to raise the standard for student ministry in the state, things start to happen."

"This is the kind of camp that can revolutionize your youth ministry."

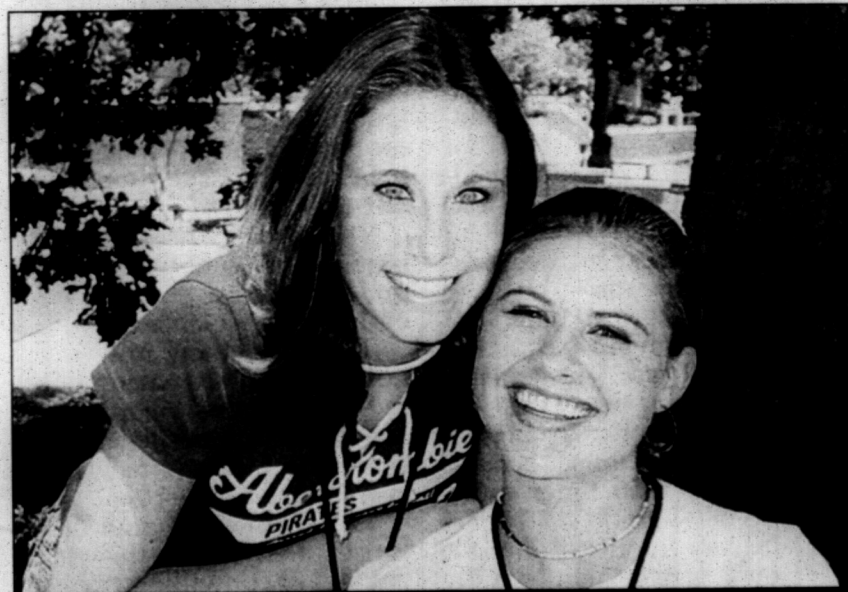
Super Summer is a ministry of the Mississippi Cooperative Program. For more information, contact Ellis at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3286 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 286. E-mail: hgellis@mbcb.org.



PREACHING THE WORD — Stacy Spencer, pastor/developer of New Direction Christian Church in Memphis, shares the Word with participants at Super Summer July 15-19 at Mississippi College in Clinton. (BR photo by Tony Martin)



MORNING LIGHT — Sunlight streams through the windows of Swor Auditorium at Mississippi College in Clinton as Super Summer participants greet friends in the balcony of the auditorium. The annual Super Summer event was held July 15-19 at the Baptist-affiliated school. (BR photo by Tony Martin)



TOGETHER AGAIN — Megan Redmond (left) of First Church, Quitman, and Amanda Barlow of First Church, Hattiesburg, renew a friendship begun last year at Super Summer at Mississippi College. (BR photo by Tony Martin)

WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

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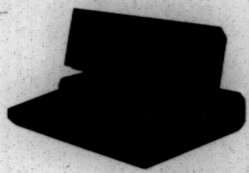
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Sex ads: what can we do?

Imagine an entire advertising category that sells itself. Even as newspaper ad reps must scratch and claw to sell space everywhere else in the paper, these ads not only come flying in over the transom — the advertisers are willing to pay rates that are double, triple, and even quadruple the price of other lineage in the paper. Welcome to the world of "adult" advertising or, to put it more plainly, sex ads...

— Editor and Publisher, July 15, 2002

Thus begins a most informative article by Mark Fitzgerald entitled, *Pleasure Doing Business*, in the July 15 edition of Editor and Publisher magazine. Informative, and troubling.

It's a fact of the publishing business that advertising is the lifeblood of newspapers. Newspapers must sell ads in huge quantities; these days the price of a subscription barely covers the cost of printing and postage. A newspaper that can't fill its "ad hole" is a newspaper in dire straits.

In lean or uncertain economic times such as we are experiencing at the moment, advertising can lag as businesses seek ways to offset revenue downturns. That sends newspaper ad salesmen, most of whom work on commission, scurrying to fill that all-important ad hole.

According to Fitzgerald's article, more and more mainstream newspapers are turning to explicit sex ads for revenue — strip clubs, massage parlors, escort services, phone sex lines, pornographic bookstores, and even "erotic bakeries."

"Increasing numbers of daily newspapers are coyly succumbing to the many seductions of sex ads," writes Fitzgerald, who notes that the Detroit Free Press/The Detroit News has hired an account executive and a copy editor to solely handle the newspapers' exploding adult advertising section.

A quick perusal of Mississippi's daily newspapers in any local library will reveal scores of ads for strip clubs, pornographic movies, and massage parlors. Some of the ads contain such enticing come-ons as, "Bi-girls: hot fun with singles and couples," and "Explore your deepest desires."

These vulgar invitations to sin and degradation are frequently found in the classified section, but an increasing number of erotic display ads (larger ads with more elaborate text, photographs, and art) are showing up in the sports section — an alarming trend noted on a national scale by Fitzgerald in his article and on a local level by the quick library perusal of the state's daily newspapers.

It's alarming to see those ads placed in the sports section because so many young people — and especially young men — read that section for news and scores on the schools and teams they follow. Just as the misuse of sexuality has destroyed so many people in our present generation, so it will be in future generations.

It doesn't have to be that way. Some prominent newspapers have made a stand against such perversion. They may not be saints in all areas of the newspaper business, but they don't quibble about rejecting sex ads.

The Los Angeles Times, one of the largest newspapers in the country, doesn't accept advertisers "whose principal business is to provide an overtly sexual service or experience," Jerry Bluestein, advertising standards coordinator, told Fitzgerald.

There are many other newspapers in the country who have placed morality and community standards above the almighty dollar. We can help make the sex ads disappear from Mississippi's

THE BLAME GAME

**GOD BLAMED ADAM.
ADAM BLAMED EVE.
EVE BLAMED THE SERPENT.
AND THE SERPENT...**



**...DIDN'T HAVE A LEG TO
STAND ON!**

newspapers, too. How? Educate yourself on the content of your local newspaper, then call the publisher (don't settle for anyone else). Express your opposition to the ads in a Christian manner, and explain how the sex ads color the content of the rest of the paper — including the legitimate advertisers on which they depend more so than the sex ads.

If your concerns are ignored, you can always drop your subscription. Because virtually all newspapers live and die by circulation numbers, that will get their attention if enough of us have the courage to get involved.

It's our move. Are we going to get in the game?

GUEST OPINION:



When the scariest place is home

By Michele Carroll, member
Morrison Heights Church, Clinton

After all the controversy the world has to offer it is always good to come home, to be among loved ones and feel safe and protected from the world, but what if the scariest place on earth is home?

Violence in the family — physical assault, psychological abuse, and destruction of property — is a relentlessly democratic activity. It occurs to members of families regardless of religion, economic class, race, or age.

Directly or indirectly, it affects everybody. The violence in our homes is contributing to the violence in our streets. It is destroying families and tearing apart communities. It is a serious and pervasive problem in this country and in our communities, for both the victim and their children. An estimated three to four million American women are battered each year by their husbands or boyfriends.

Each year, an estimated 3.3 million children are exposed to violence by family members against their mothers or female caretakers. In homes where partner abuse occurs, children are 1500 times more likely to be abused.

Last year alone, domestic violence crisis lines in Mississippi received 19,642 calls and the domestic violence

programs in the state reported 1,178 women and 1,311 children in shelter.

Incredulously, domestic violence is considered one of the least reported crimes in the U.S.

Domestic violence has been ignored and/or condoned for centuries. Many people choose to believe the issue simply does not exist. A major percentage of those who do believe the issue exists do not have a clear understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence.

There are many misconceptions and myths surrounding the perceptions people hold concerning domestic violence. Often the victims are blamed, even by themselves.

The shame and guilt of the abuse often leaves the victim unable or unwilling to seek help or press charges. Many believe that the abuse is some-

how the victim's fault; that she could have avoided it, could simply leave the abusive situation, or in some way asked for it. There is a great need for the myths and misconceptions to be dispelled.

The most commonly asked question concerning domestic violence is "Why doesn't she leave?" The answer is very complex, and the solution means understanding all the variables and what is at risk.

It is very difficult to leave an abusive relationship. Often, the abuser has threatened to do additional harm to the victim and the children if the victim leaves. Other factors which contribute to the victims remaining in the abusive relationship include: economic dependence, isolation, a desire to keep the family together, and the hope that

the battering will stop. However, the main reason the victim does not leave is fear.

What can a victim do once they decide that they are ready to leave the abusive situation? The domestic violence shelters of Mississippi are there to provide services to the families affected by the violence in their homes. Services provided by the local shelters include a 24 hour crisis line, temporary housing, advocacy and referral, counseling and any other service needed to assist victims in their journey to leave the violent situation.

It is not enough for the victims to get help; we as a society must decide that this behavior will no longer be tolerated. It is only through education and intervention that we are able to move forward.

Published in observance of the August 4 Social Issues Emphasis: Human Rights, in the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Carroll is executive director of the Mississippi Coalition Against Domestic Violence, which is comprised of twelve shelter programs dedicated to ending domestic violence in Mississippi. For more information, contact Carroll at P.O. Box 4703, Jackson, MS 39296.

LifeWay team sees professions in Kenya

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — The words of the chorus, "Baba wa mbinguni, Hakuna kama wewe," floated through the warm air as two African women sat waiting for the worship service to start. They prayed together as other members trickled in, praising God for the hundreds who had already been saved in their small Kenyan village.

The service was one of many led by a nine-member evangelism and church planting team from LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention that traveled to Kenya from June 17-30.

The team helped start six new churches and led 917 Africans to Christ.

Three LifeWay employees, Jim Shamblin of the information technology department, Bob Metcalf of publishing services and multimedia, and Barbara Metcalf in advertising and promotion went on the trip.

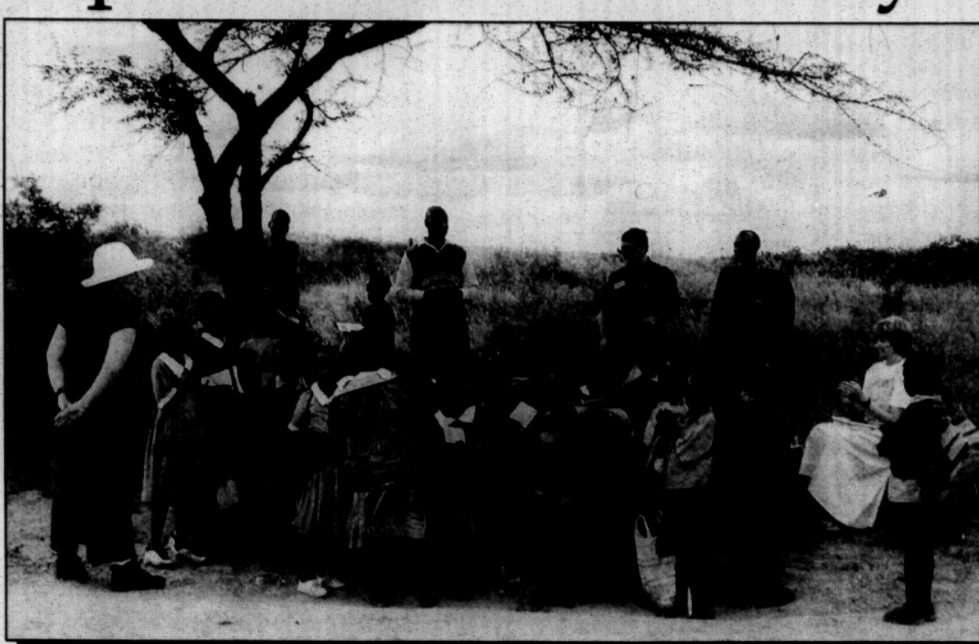
They were joined by Matt Metcalf, son of the Metcalfs; William Crowell of New York; and Jamie Dunham, Patsy Crooke, Ron Sheppard, and

Rena Smith of Harpeth Heights Church in Nashville.

"A large part of this trip also included some follow-up work," said Shamblin, who had been to Kenya three times previously. "We traveled one day to a church in Kithamani where (LifeWay President James T.) Draper evangelized last year. They now have 30 members and are preparing to purchase land for their church."

"We also received an update on the Bible School in Busia that LifeWay helped start," he added. "They had their first graduating class in October and are now a seminary extension."

This was Barbara Metcalf's fourth trip to Kenya. She dreamed of traveling to Africa since childhood and said LifeWay had helped the dream come true.



SHARING GOOD NEWS — Barbara Metcalf (adult seated, far right) hands out stickers and tracts to Kenyan school children during a volunteer trip to Africa sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. Other members of the LifeWay team looking on are Jamie Dunham (adult, far left) and Jim Shamblin (adult facing children, second from left). (BP photo)

She has traveled to Kenya with both of her sons, but this was the first year her husband, Bob, made the trip, which he described as "just amazing. My family had been begging me to go for years, and I'm so glad I did."

He said traveling to Kenya was like living in the 29th chapter of Acts. "If you look in your Bible, there is no 29th chapter, but the last verse of chapter 28 is about proclaiming the name of Christ, and that is what is happening in Kenya."

"The people in those indigenous churches are just living that, and every day hundreds of people are coming to Christ. That doesn't mean they don't have their problems, but they are so connected to the Holy Spirit."

Shamblin also noted the passion of the Kenyan people.

"A lot of the time here [in America], our choruses are empty, and we're just going through the motions. These people were full of emotion through their praises."

"I think a lot of the people on the team recognized that we've lost a lot of the essence of worship, and through the trip I believe we grew and attempted to rediscover that."

Shamblin emphasized the

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need for pastors on mission trips. Although laymen are very effective, Kenyans greatly respect those with seminary and pastoral training.

Bob Metcalf, meanwhile, expressed his desire to see more young adults get involved in missions. "It's disappointing to see how few young people go on these trips," he said. "I don't think they realize what a ministry-shaping opportunity this is."

"Whether you're a consultant, an editor, or someone in advertising, this offers a level of training you simply can't get at seminary."

Barbara Metcalf noted the cross-generational interaction the trip provided.

"We had 20-year-olds and 80-year-olds working together," she said. "That doesn't happen often over here. The group just gets really close as we work together. It's truly a learning experience."

Looking back

10 years ago

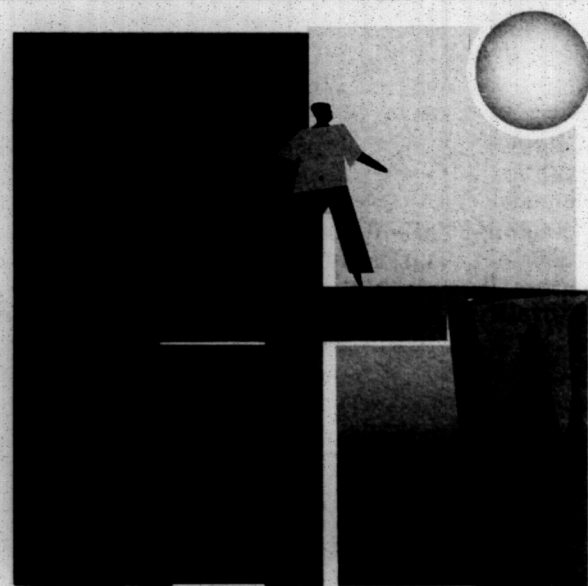
A team from First Church, Beaumont, participates in restoration work at Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky. The three-year program aims at addressing eight million dollars in deferred maintenance needs, by using volunteer teams from Southern Baptist churches.

20 years ago

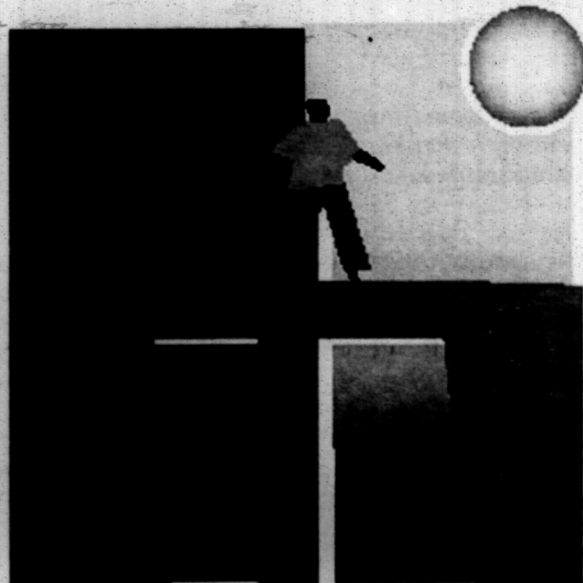
Robert L. Hamblin, former pastor at Harrisburg Church, Tupelo, is elected vice-president for evangelism by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Hamblin, professor of evangelism at New Orleans Seminary, will serve as one of four vice-presidents of the board.

50 years ago

A recent letter to The Baptist Record reads: "I am not a church member but I am as good as any of you Baptists. I don't get drunk but take a drink when I want it. I think you are going out of your way to keep writing about legal whiskey. Use what brains you have for something better."



"Yesu alisema, 'Mimi ni njia, na ukweli na uzima. Hakuna awezaye kwenda kwa Baba ila kwa kupitia kwangu.'" Yohana 14:6



"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" John 14:6

SPECIAL TRACT — An African-themed evangelistic tract was part of a volunteer team's witness in Kenya sponsored by LifeWay

GBA youth weeks packed again this year

By Stacey Billger
GBA Intern

More than 250 decisions for Christ were made by youth attending this summer's Youth Week camps at Gulfshore Assembly (GBA) in Pass Christian. The theme for the youth weeks was entitled, Real Faith for the Reel World, with a Scripture emphasis on the Book of James.

"Gulfshore youth weeks exist to provide youth with an opportunity to worship, engage in Bible study, develop relationships with peers, and receive missions and leadership training," said Reid Vance, faculty coordinator for the youth weeks.

A total of 18 college students served as faculty for the youth weeks, which attracted more than 3,000 participants to GBA, Mississippi Baptist's campground on the Gulf Coast.

"You can see the passion of the faculty and their desire for youth to become closer to God," said Clint McLain, youth pastor at First Church, Chicora.

Leading the musical worship for the camps was a four-member Christian band called The Chris Layton Band, composed of Chris Layton of Sumrall, Daniel Williamson of Columbia; Chris Carr of Picayune; and Mark Lewis of Southaven.

The Bible study for each youth week focused on teaching youth to take a stand for Christ, serve others, share their faith with peers, and submit their lives to God.

"I wanted to get across to the youth that no matter what they do or how they act, God loves them," said faculty member Sam Porter of Meridian.

Youth week participants attended afternoon breakout sessions —

topic-based discussions on challenges young people face on an everyday basis. Topics included having a positive self-image; the dangers of pornography, premarital sex, and substance abuse; and media messages.

Pete Pearce, youth minister at Tylertown Church, Tylertown, said, "My youth loved everything — the music, faculty,



BURIED ON THE BEACH — Tori McLeod of First Church, Sand Hill, finds herself underneath a load of sand on Gulfshore Assembly's beach, courtesy of friends (from left) Claire Walley of First Church, Sand Hill, and Josh McNally of Gaston Church, Booneville. The four were attending Youth Week at the assembly. (BR special photo by Stacey Billger)



MAKING FRIENDS — Participants in Youth Week at Gulfshore Assembly in Pass Christian take a break along the wall near the dining hall, one of the favorite gathering places at the Mississippi Baptist campground. (BR special photo by Stacey Billger)

speaker, and worship. Gulfshore Assembly is a top-notch facility."

Youth week camp pastors included:

- James Lewis, pastor of Carriage Hills Church, Southaven.
- Chip Stevens, pastor of First Church, Biloxi.
- Jon Daniels, pastor of Monticello Church, Monticello.
- Jim Cain, youth minister at Mt. Zion Church, Columbus.
- Bill Hardin, pastor of First Church, Picayune.
- Gary Permenter, youth evangelist in Columbus.

There's good news for churches and youth who wanted to attend one of the youth weeks in the past but found the no vacancy sign.

"Due to the popularity of our youth conferences over the past several years, the program staff of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board was able to include a seventh youth conference instead of the six that had been held.

"The schedule change will go into effect in the summer of 2003 and will enable Mississippi Baptists to accommodate an additional 500-plus young people," said Gulfshore Assembly Manager Frank Simmons.

The youth weeks are a ministry of the Mississippi Cooperative Program (CP). Gulfshore Assembly is supported by Mississippi CP and the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering.

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx
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LAX O DOMP EAHR
PHPKALB BOYP; LAX
HCPJ GCLBB APMPK
TPKOGC, APOHCPK
GCLBB LAJ
QLA TBESV HCPQ REH
RY QJ CLAX.
ZRCA HPA:HFAHJ-
PODCH

Clue: B=L

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark One: Fifteen

New Orleans Seminary to offer classes in Miss.

NEW ORLEANS, La. (Special) — New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS) will hold classes at two Mississippi churches this fall: Broadmoor Church at 1531 Highland Colony Parkway in Madison for undergraduate students, and at First Church at 100 East College Street in Clinton for graduate students.

Classes will begin on August 26. New undergraduate students will meet for testing and orientation at 2 p.m. on August 19.

New graduate students will meet for testing and orientation at 10 a.m. on August 19, in the audio-visual rooms of the Mississippi College library across the street from First Church, Clinton.

Returning students must have all paperwork, with payment, in the office of NOBTS before August 16. New students can register the first day of class.

Through extension centers located all over the Southeast, NOBTS is pushing the campus out closer to the church field, making it possible for someone who may be in a ministry posi-

tion to maintain that position and pursue theological education.

Using non-traditional schedules, technology-based classrooms, and church-focused, competency-based curriculum, the extension centers provide training that encourages healthy churches.

For additional information about NOBTS extension centers, contact Jimmy Dukes at (800) 514-1175 or visit online at www.nobts.edu/extensions.

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES BROADMOOR CHURCH MADISON

The following Bible Teaching Certificate courses will be offered on Mondays at 7 p.m.:

- Introduction to Old Testament - the Writings, to be taught August 19-October 14 by Frank Lay.
- The Life and Letters of Paul, to be taught October 21 - December 16 by John Pace.

The following two Church Music Certificate courses will be offered on Mondays at 7 p.m.:

- Hymnology, to be taught August 19 - October 14 by Jimmy McCaleb.

- Music Administration/Staff Relationships, to be taught October 21 - December 16 by Jimmy McCaleb.

The following associate-level courses will be offered on Mondays at various times:

- Personal Spiritual Disciplines (one hour) taught by Julius Thompson.
- Integrating Academics and Ministry (three hours) taught by David Michel.
- Introduction to Ministry (three hours) taught by John Temple.
- Old Testament Survey (three hours) taught by Rick Henson.

For Southern Baptists, these courses cost \$115 per semester hour with a maximum of \$1,475, in addition to a \$75 resource fee. Contact program director Julius Thompson, by phone at (601)

856-4341, or by e-mail at Thompson.Julius@worldnet.att.net.

GRADUATE COURSES FIRST CHURCH, CLINTON

The following graduate-level courses are offered on Mondays at various times:

- Exploring the New Testament (three hours) taught by Jerry Smith.
- Introductory Greek Grammar (three hours) taught by Viktor Roudkowski.
- New Testament Exegesis: 1 Corinthians (English) - (two hours) taught by Gene Henderson.
- Proclaiming the Bible (three hours) taught by John Taylor.

For Southern Baptists, these courses cost \$140 per semester hour with a maximum of \$1,475, in addition to a \$75 resource fee. Contact program director Louis Smith at (601) 956-7448 or by email at Lsmith7458@att.net.

Bible Drill Camp draws enthusiastic crowd

KOSCIUSKO, Miss. (Special) — The 2002 Bible Drill Camp on July 1-3 at Central Hills Retreat near Kosciusko drew the largest group this year to Mississippi Baptists Royal Ambassadors campground, according to camp manager Jim Ray.

Ray reported that a total of 231 campers attended the gathering, which was in its second year and, thanks to the positive response of Mississippi Baptists, is now planned as an annual event.

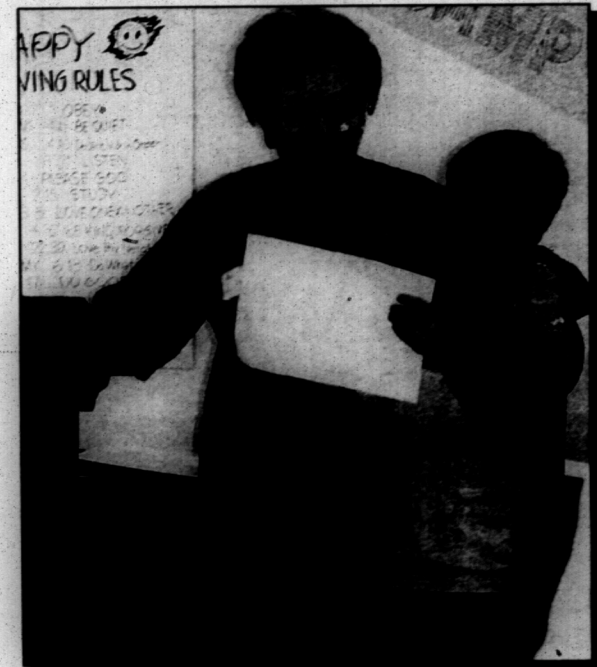
The three-day camp was filled with walks in the woods, Bible study, worship, missions study, horseback riding, canoeing, rifle safety and target

shooting, a ropes-style course, swimming, and crafts.

The schedule included five hours of Bible Study based on Bible Drill verses and passages. This year's third through fifth graders worked on the Bible Drill material for Cycle 1 (2002-03) Children's Bible Drill. The sixth graders' Bible study was a special track which introduced them to Youth Bible Drill and helped prepare them to enter the teenage years.

The four worship services were built around the theme, In God We Trust. Camp pastor Don Hicks, consultant in the Discipleship and Family Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), used as his text in each worship service one of the Children's Bible Drill Key Passages.

David Alexander, consultant in the MBCB Church Planting Department, and his wife Tori lead the camp's music and also served as Camp Missionaries. The Alexanders, members of Morrison Heights Church in Clinton, kept up the excitement level of the worship celebrations.



CONGRATULATIONS — Longtime Mississippi Bible Drill worker Lillian Walters of Lakeshore Church, Jackson, presents a certificate to an unidentified participant in the 2002 Bible Drill Camp for Older Children. (BR special photo by Peggy Lee)

using material entitled, ABC's of How to Become a Christian (the same gospel presentation used in this summer's Vacation Bible School literature). Hicks' text for the evening was centered on John 14, known as the Comfort Chapter.

Each camper was individually handed a gold dollar coin during the closing worship service to remind the children of the camp and the camp's theme, In God We Trust. Campers were challenged to remember that trusting God is really only worthwhile if they know the one true God.

During the closing service, the camp pastor used as his text the Creation story as found in Gen. 1-2 to identify the one real God as the Creator, the God of the Christian Bible, and the Father of Jesus. Campers who are Christians were challenged to remember that the God in whom they trust is their savior, Jesus Christ.

Eighteen churches from across Mississippi sent campers and counselors to the 2002 Bible Drill Camp for Older Children. Several of the church counselors had the opportunity to lead children from their church to Christ as Savior during the camp.

The camp's Bible teaching faculty included:

- Rodney Bounds of Metro Association, Jackson.
- Charles and Betty Davis of Pike Association, McComb.
- Judy Hicks of First Church, Clinton.
- Beth Holmes of Parkway Church, Clinton.
- Steve and Peggy Lee of First Church, Clinton.



- Susan Lott of First Church, Brandon.
- Jimmy McFatter of First Church, Amory.
- Lillian Walters of Lakeshore Church, Jackson.
- Kelly Webb of First Church, Kosciusko.

The Bible Drill Camp for Older Children is sponsored by the MBCB Discipleship and Family Ministry Department. It is a ministry of the Mississippi Cooperative Program (CP), and Central Hills Retreat is supported by Mississippi CP and the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering.

The 2003 event is scheduled for June 30-July 2 at Central Hills Retreat. For more information, contact Hicks at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3287 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 287. E-mail: dhicks@mbcb.org.

LOOK THIS WAY — Participants in the 2002 Bible Drill Camp for Older Children held July 1-3 at Central Hills Retreat near Kosciusko take time out to mug for the camera during one of the camp's assembly times (BR special photo by Peggy Lee)



ANOTHER OF LIFE'S MYSTERIES

Life is filled with little mysteries. Even apart from the mysteries that are spoken of in Scripture, day-to-day activities reveal so many issues that are baffling. Let me just address one here.

Literally, it happens over and over in my life, and after conferring with others, I find out that it is true with them also. What I am referring to is the mystery of the meeting at the four-way-stop.

Here is the scene: you are driving somewhere and you arrive at a four-way-stop at approximately the same moment as another driver. I believe I am correct in the assumption that in the Driver's Manual it states that if two vehicles arrive at a four-way-stop at the same time, the driver to the right is supposed to have the right-of-way and should go first — but what if you get there and you're not sure if you or the other person actually rolled up there first? How do you solve the problem? Well, that's where the mystery comes in.

I have discovered over the years that if I am in a good frame of mind, in no particular hurry



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

to get somewhere, and also feel a twinge of Christian "nicety" towards my fellow drivers, that if I motion or nod for the other driver to go ahead of me, invariably they will motion or nod for me to go first. It is not unusual for this give and take to go on a second round — "No, you go first!" "No you, please!" Recently, I was sitting at a four-way-stop during one of these perplexing moments and it was back and forth, back and forth, back and forth — four times!

On the other hand, the scenario could be that you arrive at a four-way-stop at approximately the same time as someone else. You are in a hurry and by that I mean a "life-or-death," "I'm already late," "they are going to kill me if I don't hurry up," kind of feeling. The other person (your competitor) who arrived at the four-way-stop is in the same shape as you! Both of you

feel you need and want to go first! Both of you have that desperate look on your face. You look at each other with scowls on your faces and you both mumble under your breath as one of you jumps ahead of the other one. The one left feels bad that they have been beaten out!

Bottom line — here is the mystery. Invariably, when I am in a right frame of mind to be nice toward other folks, they are nice towards me. When I am in tight straights and don't want anybody to push ahead of me, they are in the same frame of mind.

I know I should not be shocked by this, but I am. I know that I ought to learn that the Lord is always right, even in the menial events of everyday living. That's what the Lord taught us, that in life there would be a general process of reciprocal action. When you are nice to others, they will be nice to you. When you

dish out pain to others, get ready to get the same in return.

Luke 6:38 (NIV) says, "Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Translated into "Rules of the Road," it might appear to be something like this: "Be nice to folks at four-way-stops and they will be nice to you. Arrive at the four-way-stop angry, pushy, and determined to run over others and you will probably get run over yourself."

I know it's difficult for us to realize, but the same pattern works at home, on the job, at school, grocery shopping, or waiting on your food at a restaurant. Kindness has a way of generating kindness in return, and anger and hostility get their due. I suppose the true mystery is not that this actually works, but why we forget to practice it. It even works at church.

Maybe it's what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he said in Eph. 4:32, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."

With God's help, let's give it a try. Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines!

YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you.
(I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death.
(I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you.
(I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him.
(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



Big Level Church, Wiggins



GAs, RAs, & Mission Friends of First Church, Oloh



Holly Church VBS Participants, Corinth

The Children of Vacation Bible School at **Big Level Church, Wiggins**, held July 8-12 are pictured with their teachers.

Mission Friends, GAs, and RAs (pictured) of **First Church, Oloh**, participated in a Missions Walk-A-Thon. The children and their leaders solicited pledges, then walked six miles on the Longleaf Trail near Sumrall.

Holly Church, Corinth, held Vacation Bible School, Amazon Outfitters, on June 24-28. Enrollment was 110. One profession of faith was recorded. Tony Morrow is pastor.

WMU at Horton Memorial Church, Ecu, made dolls for patients at Church Street Nursing Home for Mother's Day. The children in Mission Friends (pictured) helped present the dolls.

First Church, Lucedale, had an enrollment of 233 this year for Vacation Bible School. There were 47 preschoolers, 101 children in grades 1-6, and 25 in the evening youth Vacation Bible School. Thirty-six professions of faith were made

and 30 students were added to the prospect list for outreach. Jill Dunnam was VBS Director.

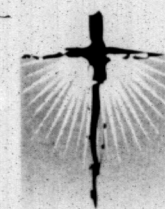
1100 students; and participated in a recording session, the product to be released in the next few months.



Bible Drill Team of First Church, Oloh

First Church, Oloh, Bible drillers shown at the state level participation in Petal, were, Joseph Byrd, Darian Nightingale, Tiffany Barefoot, Taryn Graham, and Emily Cobia.

First Church, Lucedale, took their student celebration choir to Orlando, Fla., June 24, for SonPower 2002. The 24 students rehearsed a new youth musical; went into downtown Orlando and left almost 2000 door hangers announcing a new Southern Baptist Church which had been recently started; sang at First Church, Orlando, with a group of over



MISSISSIPPI
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Mission Friends of Horton Church, Ecu



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HOME COMING - Leland, Lakeview Baptist Church 50th Anniversary Sunday, September 22, 2002; services begin at 10:30 a.m., dinner and afternoon singing, S.B. Boyett, Pastor.

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SEEKING: FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, Hopkinsville, KY, is accepting resumes for the position of full-time minister of education. Experience and a seminary degree preferred. Send resumes to FBC, 1400 South Main Street, Hopkinsville, KY 42240 or fax to (270) 889-0324 or e-mail bferrell@fbchopkinsville.net.

January Bible Study Preview Clinics 2002

"Helping Your Church Stay on Course: Studies in I Corinthians"

Conference Leader:
Dr. Gene Henderson
Pastor, FBC, Brandon

Locations:

September 23 - Blue Mountain College, Blue Mountain
September 24 - Delta State BSU, Cleveland
September 25 - Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, Jackson
September 26 - William Carey College, Hattiesburg

Conference Times (all locations):

9 - 9:30 a.m. - Registration/Refreshments
9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. - Conference - lunch is provided

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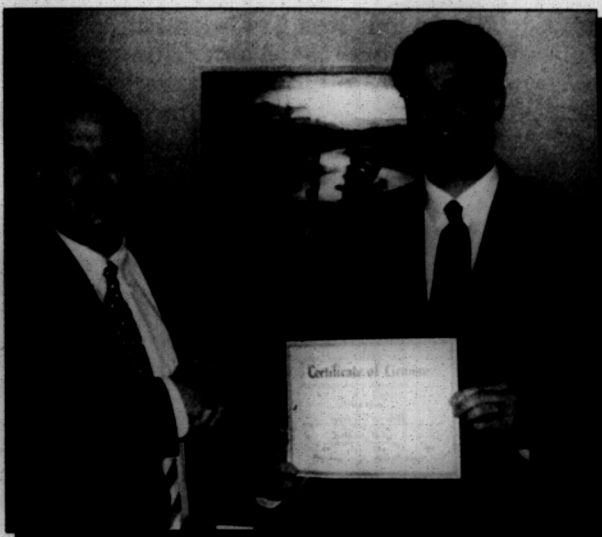
NAMES IN THE NEWS

Centerville Church, Jones Association, broke ground for a new worship center June 23. The new worship center will seat 300. Building committee co-chaired by Robert Hilbun and Raymond Kennedy. John Hilbun is pastor. Pictured, from left: Jerry and John Hilbun; Raymond and Dollie Kennedy; Dwight and Velma Green; Gail and Robert Hilbun; Carolyn Ann Jernigan; Barbara and Larry Edwards; Gerald and Elsie Pitts; J. B. and Dianne Pitts; Mr. and Mrs. Graham Reeves, Reeves Construction, Laurel.

Mark Gray, a deacon and member at Bethlehem Church, Forkville, was licensed to preach on May 26. Pictured are Stephen Lanier, pastor, left, and Gray.

First Church, Batesville, will host Bill Flowers, wide receiver for the Ole Miss Rebels,

during the 6:30 p.m. service August 4; and Rob Robertson, linebacker for the Ole Miss Rebels, during the 6:30 p.m. service August 5. These two athletes will share their personal testimonies as part of the James E. Messer Evangelism Bible Conference August 4-7.



Stephen Lanier and Mark Gray



Building Committee of Centerville Church, Soso

STAFF CHANGES

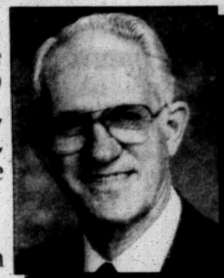


Hudson

Lee Hudson, Batesville, recently retired from the active pastorate. He is available for pulpit supply, revivals, and would

like to help churches grow a stronger Sunday School through the Growth Spiral. He can be reached at 1179 Crouch Rd., Batesville, MS, 38605. Phone (662) 561-1904.

Antioch (Marion) has called **Thomas (Tommy) Dewitt, Sr.**, as pastor beginning July 4. He previously served as supply in many area churches in Pike, Lawrence, and Walthall counties. He also served Oak Grove Church in Amite County.



Bush

Bellevue Church, Hattiesburg, has called **Russell Bush** as interim pastor, effective July 1. Bush was pastor of Main Street Church,



Taylor

Hattiesburg, before his retirement.

Big Level Church, Wiggins, has called **Jerome Taylor** as youth minister, effective

June 16. Taylor, a student at William Carey College, previously served Magnolia Church, Laurel.

Bissell Church, Tupelo, has called **Brad Vose** as music and youth director. He is a graduate of Union University, Jackson, Tenn., and Southwestern Seminary. He comes from East Hickory Church, Hickory, N.C.

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August 4 - 7, 2002

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Divorce: no road to happiness

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — People who divorce their spouses when marriages get rocky are less likely to find happiness than those who stay married, according to a recent study by a team of leading family scholars.

The study, the first of its kind, found no evidence that unhappily married adults who divorced were typically any happier than unhappily married people who stayed married. Researchers, led by University of Chicago sociologist Linda Waite, also determined that two-thirds of unhappily married spouses who stayed married reported that their marriages were happy five years later.

Divorce did not typically reduce symptoms of depression or raise self-esteem, the study found.

The data, presented July 12 in Arlington, Va., at the Smart Marriage conference sponsored by the Coalition for Marriage, Families and Couples Education, was collected by the National Survey of Family and Households, a nationally representative survey that extensively measures personal and marital happiness.

REVIVAL DATES

Bethany, Bay Springs: August 18; Homecoming, 11 a.m.; meal in fellowship hall; Darrell Craft, preaching; revival services Monday-Wednesday, 7 p.m.; Charles Burnham, preaching.

Antioch, Marion: August 4-7; Homecoming Sunday 11 a.m.; covered dish luncheon; afternoon services following meal; Richard Green, evangelist; Erin Hodges, music; Vanessa King, pianist; Revival services Monday-Wednesday 7 p.m.; Tommy Dewitt, pastor.

Union, Brookhaven: August 11-14; Sunday 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Monday-Wednesday 7 p.m.; John Smith, retired missionary, evangelist; Stacy Smith, music director; Beverly Montgomery, pianist. John Fisk, Sr., pastor.

Goodwater, Lemon, Smith County: August 4-7; Sunday 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.; Monday-Wednesday 7 p.m.; Randall Creel, Forest, evangelist; Danny and Nancy Harrison, Lake, music; Robin Brumfield, interim pastor.

19th Avenue, Hattiesburg: August 18-21; 7 p.m.; Dewey Smith, evangelist; Monty Bounds, music.

Emmanuel, Union: August 11-14; Sunday 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Monday-Wednesday 7 p.m.; Bill Hall, pastor, evangelist.

Providence, Grenada: August 4-7; Sunday 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Robert Clark, speaker; Monday-Wednesday 7 p.m.; Speakers are: Monday night, Matt Buckles; Tuesday night, Dan Stroud; Wednesday night, Bobby McKay; Don Montgomery, music director; Tena Taylor, pianist.

Robinson Road, Gulfport: August 19-22; 7 p.m.; Guest speakers: Monday, LaRue Stevens, FBC, Long Beach; Tuesday, Rossie Francis, Grace

Temple, Gulfport; Wednesday, Tommy Mosser, Bayou View, Gulfport; Thursday, Bill Renick, Lemoyne Boulevard, Biloxi; Robby Myrick, guest music director.

Big Creek, Waynesboro: August 18-21; Sunday 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Monday-Wednesday 7 p.m.; Q. T. Curtis, Mobile, Alabama, evangelist; Eric Benson, Laurel, music leader; Doug White, pastor.

Good Hope, Lena: August 4-9; Sunday 11 a.m.; Monday-Friday 7 p.m.; Lamar Williams, Seminary, evangelist; Shirley O'Bannon and Maggie Harris, music; Wayne McGee, pastor.

Grace, Philadelphia: August 11-14; Sunday 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Dennis Duvall, evangelist; Fay and Reuben Moore, music leaders; Monday-Wednesday 7 p.m.; Danny Lanier, evangelist; Danny Lanier, music director; Dennis Duvall, pastor.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

HOMEcomings & ANNIVERSARIES

Phalti, Pachuta: Aug. 11; worship service 11 a.m.; dedication of pavillion, 12 noon and dinner on the grounds. Thomas E. Kittrell, pastor.

Big Creek, Waynesboro: Aug. 4, 11 a.m.; lunch in fellowship hall, 12 noon; singing, 1:30 p.m.; DeJuan Walley, Waynesboro, speaker; Doug White, pastor.

New Home, Bay Springs, Smith County: Aug. 11; morning worship; lunch, 12 noon; special singing, evening; collection taken for cemetery fund; Jim Futral, speaker.

First, Ovett: Aug. 4; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.; worship, 10:55 a.m.; lunch in fellowship hall, singing and testimonies following; Ed Holliman, former interim pastor, speaker; Tony Stroud, interim pastor.

Juniper Grove, Poplarville: Aug. 11; Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.; dinner on the ground following; Ken Rhodes, speaker.

Rock Bluff, Smith Co., Rankin Assn.: Aug. 4; worship, 11 a.m.; covered dish luncheon following; Donnie Stuart, speaker; Cassie Means, music.

Robinson Road, Gulfport: Aug. 18; worship, 10 a.m.; dinner on the grounds following; afternoon concert by Embrace; Ray Wuerzer, speaker; Rocky Everett, pastor.

Salem, Raymond: August 10; 125 Anniversary and birthday party, 2-4 p.m.; Rusty Bird, pastor.

Nov. 10; 50th anniversary. All past members are encouraged to contact the church to be placed on anniversary mailing list. Phone or fax (601) 264-7699; e-mail Belleviewbchurch@aol.com.

New Hope, Foxworth: Aug. 11; 130th anniversary; services at 11 a.m.; covered dish lunch; singing at 6 p.m.

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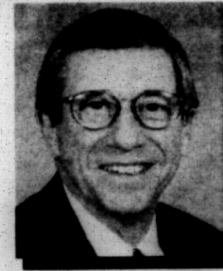
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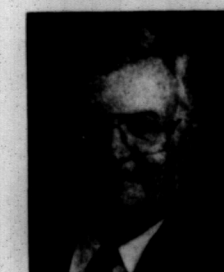
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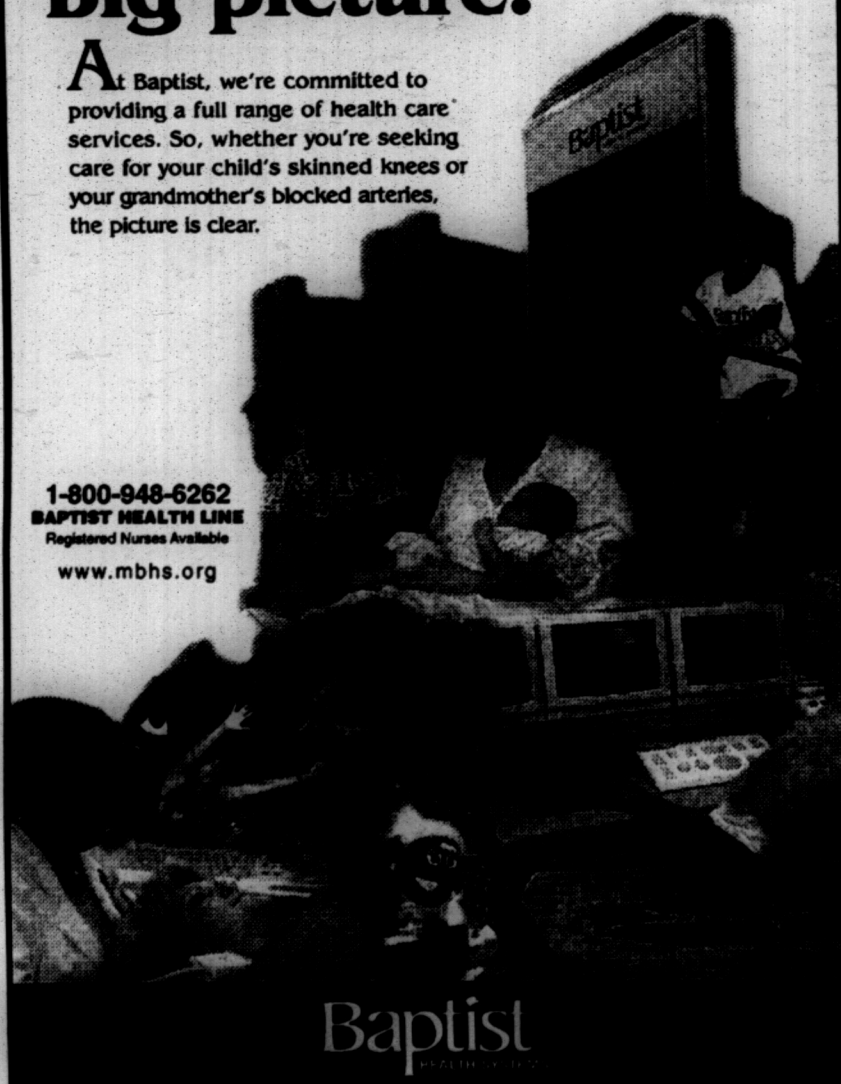
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IS TRUTH DANGEROUS?

Editor:

If historical records are true as you indicate, then why is it dangerous to speak the truth? One of the main problems in our day is that so few have the backbone like Jerry Vines had to expose false teaching. Vines is to be commended.

In Titus 1 Paul exposed false teaching among the Cretians when he said, "They are deceivers whose mouths must be stopped for they are teaching things they ought not." He said that one of their own said, "The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies." Would anyone accuse Paul for not having compassion for souls or would he say things that would hinder the gospel? He said, "Rebuke them sharply?" What about the rebuke Jesus pronounced on the scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites in Matthew 23. What was the purpose of Paul and Jesus' words? Maybe they would have been better left unsaid.

Albert McMullen
Meridian

CHOOSE SIDES

Editor:

I would like to respectfully disagree with the editorial, Dangerous Words, for What Purpose, in the June 20 issue. In that article, editor Perkins criticized Jerry Vines for referring to Mohammed as a "demon-possessed pedophile" in his address to this year's Southern Baptist Convention meeting.

If anything, American Christians have gone too far in the other direction since Sept. 11. There has been so much

favorable comment on Islam in the American media that I recently read that there has actually been a great upswing in conversions in our country to that religion. Maybe it's time Americans heard that Islam's founder was among that group (pedophiles) which is most despised by most of our population.

The attitude that we should avoid offending anyone in case that might make it harder to convert them runs directly contrary to Christ's own teachings in Luke 12:51-53, where he said he was come not to bring peace to the earth, but rather division.

If division is inevitable, the only thing for us to do is choose sides, and I believe Jerry Vines did that rightly.

J. C. Brady, pastor
Port Gibson

STANDING BESIDE VINES

Editor:

I hope the words you wrote in volume 126, number 20 of The Baptist Record were your own words and not that of The Baptist Record. Here are my words and not that of my church.

I'll stand beside Jerry Vines anytime and tell the world just how sorry Mohammed was and how great my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is. It's time for Christians to speak up, get the politics out of religion, and tell the truth for what it really is. It's time to quit tiptoeing around certain issues and tell the truth.

If one is a homosexual, that is his or her choice, not my God's choice, and they are going to hell if they do not "get straight," believe on the Lord

Jesus Christ, and live the life of a born-again Christian. Do you, Bro. Perkins, think that the "gays" on St. Ann Street in New Orleans want to hear this? Probably not, but they need to.

Historical records do not indicate anything. They prove in black and tarnished white that Mohammed was a weak, demon-possessed pervert who put on a convincing show and now he has a following, and you think Muslims shouldn't hear this, but they need to. Just as the sun will rise tomorrow, terrorists will strike again and Christian missionaries will be persecuted and killed for what they preach whether Jerry Vines had spoken those words or not.

Steve Little, min. of music
Graceland Church
Vanceleave

SPEAK GOSPEL TRUTH

Editor:

I read with great interest the editorial by William Perkins in the June 20 edition of The Baptist Record. In that piece, Perkins criticized Jerry Vines for calling Mohammed a demon-possessed pedophile during his sermon to the participants of the 2002 SBC Pastor's Conference. Now, I realize we are all entitled to our opinions, but I take issue with what Perkins wrote.

My issue is this: when did it become wrong to call sin, sin? No matter how you look at it, Mohammed was a sick man who needed a relationship with Jesus Christ. Vines spoke the truth. If we, as pastors, were to worry about who we offended when we preach, then we would never

preach against sin of any kind. This really addresses a greater issue in our pulpits today. We have too many pastors entertaining their congregations so as not to offend them, instead of faithfully and prayerfully preaching God's Holy Word, which can sting and offend because of the truth it reveals.

The Bible tells us that when Jesus confronted the priestly aristocracy of his day, he did not try to temper his words so as not to offend them. Jesus spoke the mind of his Father and shared the truth. The truth is what Jesus used to reach a dying, lost world with the freedom of the Gospel.

It is time to speak the truth of the Gospel, confronting sin, from a heart of love.

Terry L. Upchurch, pastor
Mt. Olive Church, Meridian

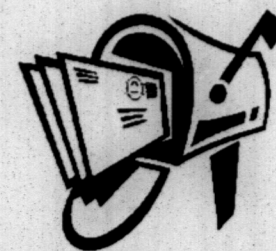
CLOSE TO HOME

Editor:

The present debate of a required affirmation of the Baptist Faith and Message (BFM) hits close to home. My mother, sister, and brother-in-law are foreign missionaries. My BFM is the Bible.

By strict coincidence, during the heat of this debate, my daily reading (5/6 from My Utmost of His Highest/Selections for the Year by Oswald Chambers) states, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then Gal. 5:1... A Spiritually minded man will never come to you with the demand — 'Believe this and that;' but with the demand that you square your life with the standards of Jesus..."

Diane Green
Naperville Ill.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

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NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH, Lauderdale Association is seeking a bi-vocational minister of music. For more information please call the church office at (601) 693-4490 or send information to: New Hope Baptist Church 6573 Hwy 145 South, Meridian, MS 39301.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & EDUCATION: New Hope Baptist Church is looking for the person God has selected to serve as minister of education and music. Education and experience a must. Salary and benefits determined by education and experience level. Please send resume to: Search Committee, New Hope Baptist Church, 508 New Hope Church Road, Foxworth, MS 39483.

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FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Creation: How Did It Begin?

Genesis 1:1-3,6,9,11,14-18,26,31; 2:1

By Ruth V. Gamble



Gamble

This month's study is about beginnings: the origin of the universe, the origin of human beings, the origin of evil, and beginnings of human relationships. "Genesis" means "beginning." The first five words of our Bible are a dramatically simple statement — "In the beginning God created." No attempt to give scientific proof is offered. None is necessary. Each creative activity begins with "and God said..." and ends with the pronouncement that he saw "it was good."

Creation was planned and purposeful, designed by an intelligent, wise Creator. The orderly progression of activities the first three days sets the stage for the completed activity on days four through six. On day one God created light and divided light from

darkness in preparation for day four when the sun, moon, and stars were placed to "... be for signs and seasons, and for days and years [and to give] light upon the earth." On day two he prepared the firmament, separating the "waters above the waters below" to provide suitable habitat for birds and fish created on day five. On day three the waters below were gathered together, and dry land appeared, ready to support plant life and land animals created on day six. Also on this day, but as a separate and distinct creative act, God created human beings to "have dominion" over his created universe.

The words "create" and "make" are of special importance. The basic meaning of the word "create" is that something is brought into existence from

nothing, while the word "make" means to produce something from that which already exists. Only three times does Scripture say God created. Genesis 1:1 states that God created original matter — the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:21 states that he created animal life, and in Genesis 1:26 he created human life to "replenish the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over...every living thing...upon the earth." Everything else was "made" and placed in the carefully produced framework of days one through three.

Although the word "Trinity" does not appear in this account, many believe it to be clearly evident. The plural pronoun "our" in Genesis 1:26 is viewed as being a reference to Jesus. In John 1:1-3 Jesus, the Word, is said to be "in the beginning with God...[he] was God... all things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." Colossians 1:16 adds that "all things were created by him

(Jesus) and for him." Evidence of the Holy Spirit is seen in Genesis 1:2. Thus we see the Father/Creator, Son/Word, and Holy Spirit — the Trinity.

A more extensive study should be made concerning the words "day" and "light" in the account. Some consider "day" to be a 24-hour period of time stressing the phrase "and the evening and the morning" as well as God's omnipotence and omniscience which could have easily produced the events in the 24-hour time. Others believe it refers to a longer period of time which may have occurred between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 that would allow for scientific explanations such as the Gap Theory. The creation of "light" on the first day poses a question for some because the sun, moon, and stars were not put in place until the fourth day. However, we know there are other sources of light than the heavenly luminaries. Also, scripture often refers to God himself, and to Jesus, as "light."

The secular worldview is naturalistic and humanistic and

rejects, or simply ignores, the biblical record of creation. The secular Humanist Manifesto I has as its first affirmation that "...humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created." Numerous theories such as evolution dominate educational systems worldwide. Tragically, many adults — even some Christians — do not acknowledge the significance of the biblical account of creation as orderly and purposeful.

The biblical worldview offers the reasonable proposition that God created the world from nothing, often referred to as *creatio ex nihilo*. In this biblical worldview each activity was designed with a purpose by an intelligent, wise Creator, and declared by him to be "very good."

When we consider the complexity and magnificence of all aspects of creation it makes us want to sing "How Great Thou Art." What an awesome God we have!

Gamble is a member of Slayden Church, Slayden.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Grief

2 Samuel 18:1-19:8

By Bart Walker



Walker

The grief of losing a child has to be beyond the description that any words can ever give, but to lose a child and to know that one is in part to blame for the situation that caused his death must be even inexplicably worse! Such is the case in the life of David in this week's lesson.

Etched permanently in David's memory are the final words of Nathan's prophecy after the adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah (2 Samuel 12:11). Nathan said, "Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your companion, and he shall lie with your wives in broad daylight.'"

Our lesson begins with David numbering and prepar-

ing his troops for battle by dividing them into three groups. Under the advice of his leaders he does not

go into battle, but pleads with Joab, Abishai and Ittai, his appointed leaders, for merciful dealing with Absalom when the time of confrontation comes. The great loss begins not with what would later happen to Absalom, but the deaths of 20,000 men of Israel who were slaughtered by David's men and by the dangerous territory of the forest.

The great loss continues when, in the heat of retreat, Absalom catches either his hair or his head in the thick, low-hanging branches of a great oak tree. When one man spies Absalom hanging between heaven and earth, he spares Absalom because of David's plea for mercy on

Absalom's behalf. When he recounts the event to Joab he is rebuked for not taking Absalom's life and Joab proceeds to take ten men and three spears to Absalom and pierce his heart with the spears while the ten men who carried Joab's armor finish him off.

The overwhelming grief begins when word of the battle begins to get back to David. David, torn in spirit, knowing that a loss would mean his death and a victory the death of his son, waits patiently in the gate of Mahanaim. The watchman informs him that a runner, then two, was coming toward the city to bring news. The first, the swifter Ahimaaz, greets David with word of victory, but does not reveal the fate of Absalom. The second, a Cushite, gives answer concerning the fate of Absalom with the response, "Let the enemies of my lord the king, and all who rise up against you for evil, be as that young man!" David withdraws to his

private chambers while uttering the phrase that many a parent who has lost a child has uttered, "Would that I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son."

David's grief at this point becomes national as the whole of David's people is grieved at the tragic loss of a second of David's sons. This grief eventually debilitates David and prevents him from celebrating God's deliverance for his followers and his nation. Joab, knowing David's plight, confronts him and provides helpful guidance for him. He points out that David's grief has become so debilitating that it has affected the valiant soldiers who risked their very lives to bring victory. Joab informs David that if this behavior continues that he stands in danger of losing his support among his followers and warriors.

David, seeing that his grief has taken on harmful expressions, returns to public life. This return to public life eventually brings about the restoration of the whole kingdom to him.

As we reflect upon these tragic events, we must remem-

ber two great lessons from the texts we have studied the last few weeks. First, the temporal fun of sin is in no way comparable to the lasting fallout that comes from its consequences. Had David seen the price tag up front, it is likely he would have passed on that one night of pleasure. Second, grief can be debilitating to even the greatest of God's people. If you have encountered grief due to some tragic event in your life, take heart that even those who are "after God's own heart" experience sorrow that can immobilize them. If you are in that state now, take time to come aside with the Lord Jesus who said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." It is the Lord Jesus who loves you, heals you and will ultimately make those who are spiritually and emotionally lame (debilitated or immobilized by grief and hurt) and make them to walk again!

Walker is pastor of Parkway Church, Natchez.

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Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

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All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

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Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of *The Village View* is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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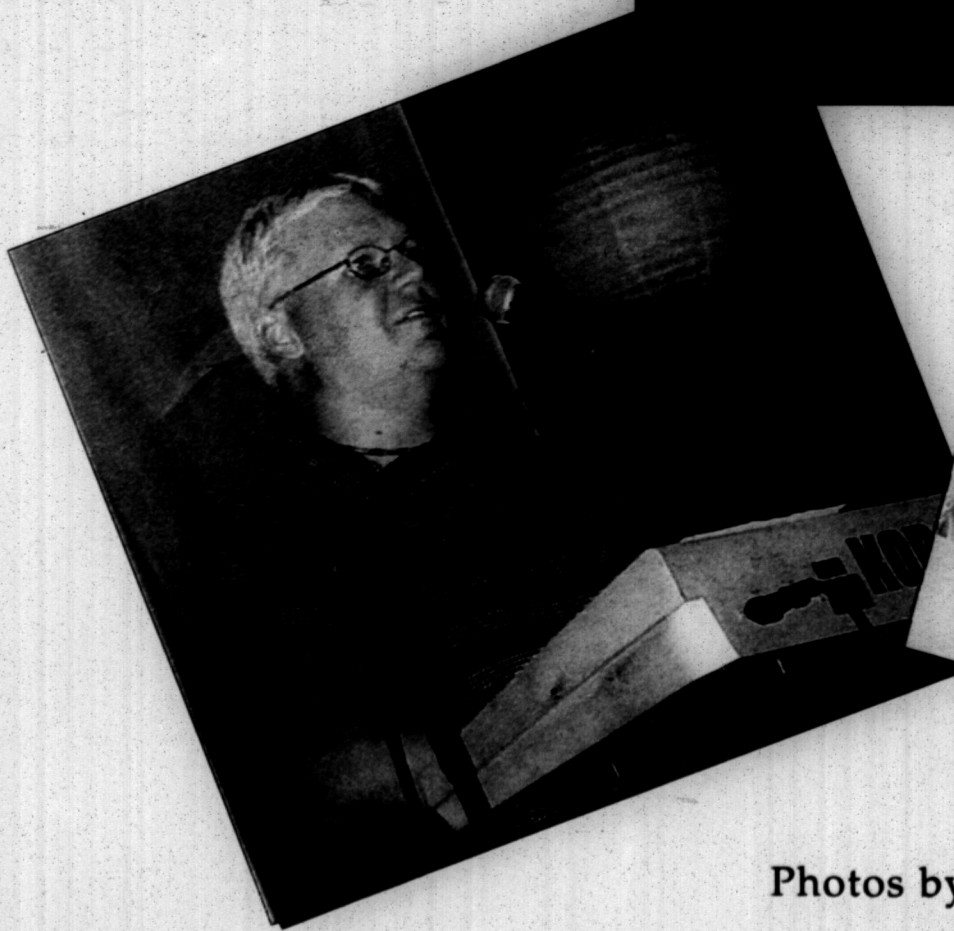
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